

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L LA PAZ 0581

EXDIS

DEPARTMENT PASS USCINCSO QUARRY HTS CZ

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, MILI, PE, BL, BC, CI
SUBJECT: CONTINUED GOB CONCERN ABOUT POSSIBLE CHILE/PERU WAR

1. AN EXCELLENT SOURCE, WELL CONNECTED WITH THE FOREIGN MINISTRY, HAS INFORMED ME THAT ON WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 19, PRESIDENT BANZER MET WITH THE HIGH COMMAND OF THE ARMED FORCES AND KEY MEMBERS OF THE CABINET TO DISCUSS POSSIBLE OUTBREAK OF WAR BETWEEN CHILE AND PERU, THE BOLIVIAN POLICY WITH REGARD TO ITS OWN SECURITY, AND POSSIBLE ASSISTANCE FROM OTHER COUNTRIES. REPORTEDLY, THE WAR SCARES HAVE NOT DIED DOWN AND INDEED HAVE BEEN ACCELERATED IN THE PAST SEVERAL DAYS. THERE IS NOW CONCERN THAT PERU MAY PLAN AN ATTACK ON CHILE IN THE MONTH OF APRIL FOLLOWING THE END OF THE RAINEY SEASON IN BOLIVIA. THE BOLIVIAN MILITARY HAS REPORTS ABOUT THE STATIONING OF PERUVIAN TANKS IN SOUTHERN PERU, PROBABLY IN PUNO, AND HAS ALSO LEARNED OF PERUVIAN CONTINGENCY PLANS FOR A PINCERS MOVEMENT ON NORTHERN CHILE INVOLVING CUTTING THROUGH BOLIVIAN TERRITORY. THE BOLIVIAN MILITARY BELIEVES THAT THE SOVIET UNION IS DIRECTING PERUVIAN STRATEGY IN PURSUANCE OF A LONG-HELD
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POLICY TO OVERTHROW MODERATE MILITARY GOVERNMENTS IN THE SOUTHERN CONE. THE BOLIVIAN MILITARY HAS REPORTS THAT THE FIRST PILOTS TRAINED BY THE SOVIETS IN THE USE OF THE RECENTLY PURCHASED SOVIET AIRCRAFT HAVE RETURNED TO LIMA.

2. ACCORDING TO THE SOURCE, THE GOB FINDS ITSELF IN AN IMPOSSIBLE DILEMMA. IT CANNOT DECLAR ITSELF NEUTRAL

BECAUSE IT CANNOT PROTECT ITSELF FROM VIOLATIONS BY EITHER CHILE OR PERU. IT CANNOT JUMP ON THE SIDE OF EITHER PERU OR CHILE FOR ADVERSE CONSEQUENCES WILL FOLLOW REGARDLESS OF WHICH IT PICKS. IT CANNOT PARTICIPATE IN THE ARMED CONFLICT BECAUSE IT HAS NOT MILITARY CONTRIBUTION TO MAKE. YET THE MILITARY BELIEVES IT MUST HAVE SOME CREDIBLE WAY TO PROTECT BOLIVIAN NATIONAL INTERESTS AS A MATTER OF BASIC MILITARY PRIDE. THE AUTHORITIES ARE AWARE THAT EVEN IF THEY WERE TO EMBARK ON AN EXPANDED ARMS PURCHASE PROGRAM THE EQUIPMENT WOULD NOT ARRIVE FOR A LONG TIME. ACCORDINGLY, AN IMPORTANT SHORT-TERM OBJECTIVE OF THE GOB MAY BE TO SEEK FROM FRIENDLY COUNTRIES SOME FORM OF GUARANTEE OF ITS TERRITORY.

3. THE SOURCE REPORTED THAT A DECISION IS BEING CONSIDERED TO CALL ME TO THE FOREIGN MINISTRY TO REVIEW THE BOLIVIAN POSITION AND THE US ROLE IN THE EVENT OF A POSSIBLE CONFLICT BETWEEN CHILE AND PERU. ACCORDING TO HIM, THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS MAY BE PUT TO US:

A. DOES THE US HAVE GOOD INFORMATION ON THE DELIVERIES OF MILITARY MATERIAL FROM THE SOVIET UNION TO PERU?

B. WHAT IS THE US OPINION ABOUT THE INCREASING SALES OF SOVIET ARMS TO PERU?

C. DO WE KNOW OF ANY POLITICAL CONDITIONS ATTACHED TO THE ARMS SALES?

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D. IF THE SOVIETS WERE TO SEND MORE SOPHISTICATED EQUIPMENT TO PERU WOULD THE US BE PREPARED TO BLOCK ITS ARRIVAL AS IT DID DURING THE CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS?

E. IN THE EVENT THAT WAR BROKE OUT BETWEEN CHILE AND PERU WHICH PUT IN DANGER THE TERRITORIAL STATUS OF BOLIVIA, WHAT WOULD BE THE ATTITUDE OF THE US?

F. IF BOLIVIA DECIDED TO DECLARE ITS NEUTRALITY COULD IT COUNT ON A GUARANTEE OF THE US IN CLOSE RELATION WITH VENEZUELA, ARGENTINA, AND BRAZIL?

4. ALTHOUGH THE ANSWERS TO SOME OF THESE QUESTIONS HAVE BEEN INCLUDED IN RECENT EXCHANGES BETWEEN THE DEPARTMENT AND THE FIELD ON THIS SUBJECT, I WOULD APPRECIATE HAVING GUIDANCE ON EACH ON IN THE EVENT THAT I AM CALLED TO THE FOREIGN MINISTRY AND THESE QUESTIONS ARE PUT TO ME.
STEDMAN

NOTE BY OC/T: LA PAZ 0581 NOT PASSED ABOVE ADDRESSEE.

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